



ROCKY MOUNTAIN COLLEGE

Introduction to Political Science

Course Syllabus:
Fall 2013

POL 101
TTh 2:30-3:45
Tech Hall 14

Professor: Dr. O’Gara
Office: Morledge-Kimball 214
Office Hours: TTh 11:30-12:45, and *all*
day MWF (by appointment)
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Course Description:

This course serves as an introduction to the discipline of political science by taking a critical look at one seminal and foundational text: Plato’s *Republic*. While Plato’s work in this regard is rightfully deemed to cross disciplinary lines into the fields of philosophy, psychology, ethics, and perhaps even literature, our focus in this course on its politics – specifically asking questions about power relations, structures and functions of governing bodies, and the ultimate question of who should rule and why.

To accomplish this goal we will first read an introductory text on the study of political science, *Political Life and Social Change* by Charles Andrain, with the ultimate goal of attaining a comprehensive understanding of the who, what, how, and why of government. Following this model, we will want consider the ways in which Plato deals with these issues in his work: we will discuss the degree to which *The Republic* represents ideas that we hold today, thus making them something close to universals. Finally, we will read Bertrand Russell’s treatment on the varieties and manifestations of power, essentially as a summative analysis of the ideas discussed throughout the course.

Thus we will spend the first part of the course establishing a framework for political analysis, then undertake a careful textual analysis of Plato’s words, ideas, and the structure of his complex argument, followed by an in-depth discussion on power politics and its relation to both contemporary politics as well as its relevance for the scientific study of politics. Each text is, at times, difficult reading. But a thorough understanding of the utopia of the Philosopher Kings, juxtaposed against Andrain’s framework and Russell’s dissection of power, will serve as both an introduction to the study of political science as well as provide a foundation in close analytical reading.

Please note that this is *not* a course in current events; course discussions will require significant depth of thought and theoretical nuance, and will not consist of competing polemics. The course will be run as a true (discussion-based) seminar, in which students are expected to develop their analytical skills and ability to critically evaluate detailed materials and to comprehend competing and highly complex ideas.

Required Readings:

Charles Andrain, *Political Life and Social Change: An Introduction to Political Science*

Plato, *Crito* (Benjamin Jowett translation)

Plato, *The Republic* (C.D.C. Reeve translation, Hackett Publishing Company, ISBN: 9780872207363)

Bertrand Russell, *Power*

Supplemental readings will be handed out in class or can be obtained online.

Course Policies:

The first requirement of each student is to understand that this is an academic environment and as such it is necessary that there is a high degree of civility, respect for fellow students, and respect for the material. You are expected to do *all* assigned readings, and you must participate in class if you hope to earn a passing grade.

1. Missed Classes: This course covers a great deal of material and meets just twice a week; therefore repeated absences will not be tolerated. Students are allowed three absences, regardless of circumstance. Subsequent absences will result in your course grade being rescaled down by 1/3; i.e. a student with six absences will have their final grade reduced 1 point on a 4.0 scale.
2. Missed Assignments: If you do not turn in a graded assignment your maximum grade in the course will be rescaled along a 90/80/70/60 scale; i.e. if you fail to hand in a paper worth 20 percent of your grade, your highest possible grade in the class will be a B, regardless of your average on a 4-point scale.
3. Late Papers: Papers will lose one full letter grade per class session late. No exceptions.
4. Plagiarism and Cheating: Neither will be tolerated, and if a student is caught doing either they will fail the course and I will recommend to the Dean of Students that said student be expelled from school.
5. Electronic Devices: the use of any electronic device is strictly prohibited in this course. This includes e-readers, as I will not participate in the demise of the written word. Cell phone usage is also prohibited; a student who is seen using their cell phone for any reason will receive an F as their final grade in the course.
6. Email: I check my email daily but I prefer not to use it as a means of conversation. Email should be used only for quick, non-emergency questions and for setting up appointments for face-to-face meetings in my office. Informal emails will be ignored and discarded. Also, for institutional as well as technological reasons, only communicate with me via your official @rocky.edu account.

Assessment Outcomes:

This course satisfies the general education requirement in the Social Sciences. Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate critical thinking about major ideas in the field through writing;
2. Use the appropriate disciplinary approach to study human behavior;
3. Identify ethical issues relevant to the human condition.

In addition, the following History & Political Science major assessment criteria are advanced:

1. Analyze, interpret, and critically evaluate major political issues and/or historical events;
2. Demonstrate familiarity with the major theories and thinkers in the field;
6. Understand the difference between opinions and substantiated scholarly claims;
7. Effectively utilize and appropriately cite academic sources;
8. Write papers essentially free of errors in grammar, mechanics, and spelling.

OPI/PEPPS Standards and Learning Outcomes:

Standard 10.58.523, Social Studies

5(a): the nature of individual dignity, human rights, (popular) sovereignty, political power, citizenship, and political authority;

Learning Outcomes 2, 6, 7, 8.

5(f): the nature of international relations and the principles and organizations that are used to mediate multinational conflict and achieve multinational order;

Learning Outcomes 1, 6, 7, 8.

Graded Assignments:

Exam 1:

On October 1 (week 6 of the semester) we will have an in-class midterm exam on Charles Andrain's framework for political analysis. We will have a brief review the session prior to the exam, and you will be given explicit guidelines for studying.

It is my philosophy that exams should be completely predictable in the sense that students will know exactly what is expected of them before they walk in the room. You will encounter no trick questions. This will give students the opportunity to showcase what they *do* know, rather than to try to get at what they *don't*.

Exam 2:

On November 14 (week 12 of the semester) we will have a second in-class exam in which you will be expected to explain the totality of Plato's argument in *The Republic*. As with the midterm, we will have a brief review session prior to the exam.

Final Paper:

As a capstone to the course, in lieu of a final exam you will be required to write a 6-8 page paper that explores the concepts discussed throughout the course, through the specific analytical lens provided by Bertrand Russell in his book *Power*. You will be given a detailed prompt to help frame your ideas, and no outside research is required (nor allowed). Two paper and one electronic copy are required.

Reading Quizzes:

There will be numerous quizzes given throughout the semester; the exact number will depend on rates of participation in course discussions and whether students come to class prepared. Reading quizzes are rudimentary examinations used to determine who is and who is not doing assigned readings. Quizzes are held at the beginning of class, they count as 20 percent of your final grade, and no make-up quizzes will be offered – but each student will be granted one mulligan. A quiz missed because of an absence will be counted as a zero on the quiz but not also as an absence (this method is less detrimental to your final course grade).

Grading:

All papers and exams will be graded on an A-F scale and will be averaged as follows:

Exam 1:	20 percent
Exam 2:	20 percent
Final Paper:	20 percent
Quizzes:	20 percent
Participation:	20 percent

Grading Criteria:

These are the standards I adhere to when I grade essays. Pluses and minuses represent shades of difference, as do split grades (e.g. B-/C+). Grades are based on the evidence of the essay submitted, not on effort or time spent.

A

Excellent in every way (this is not the same as perfect). This is an ambitious, perceptive essay that grapples with interesting, complex ideas; responds discerningly to counter-arguments; and explores well-chosen evidence revealingly. The analysis enhances, rather than underscores, the reader's and writer's knowledge (it doesn't simply repeat what has been taught). There is a context for all the ideas; someone outside the class would be enriched, not confused, by reading the essay. Its introduction opens up, rather than flatly announces, its thesis. Its conclusion is something more than a summary. The language is clean, precise, often elegant. The reader should feel enlightened and educated for having read the paper. There's something new in your analysis, something perhaps only you could have written and explored, in this particular way. The writer's stake in the material is obvious.

B

A piece of writing that reaches high and achieves many of its aims. The ideas are solid and progressively explored but some thin patches require more analysis and/or some stray thoughts don't fit in. The language is generally clear and precise but occasionally not. The evidence is relevant, but there may be too little; the context for the evidence may not be sufficiently explored, so that I have to make some of the connections that the writer should have made clear for me. This is a solid essay whose reasoning and argument may nonetheless be rather routine (the limitation is largely conceptual).

C

A piece of writing that has real problems in one of these areas: conception (there's at least one main idea but it is fuzzy and difficult to understand); structure (non-linear development of your ideas); use of textual evidence (weak or non-existent -- the connections among the ideas and the evidence are not made and/or are presented without context, or are simple platitudes and generalizations); language (the sentences are often awkward, dependent on unexplained abstractions, sometimes contradict each other). The essay may not move forward but rather may repeat its main points, or it may touch upon many (and apparently unrelated) ideas without exploring any of them in sufficient depth and without a developmental flow. Punctuation, spelling, grammar, paragraphing, and transitions may be a problem.

- or- an essay that is largely plot summary or "interpretive summary" of the text, but is written without major problems.
- or- an essay that is chiefly a personal reaction to something. Well-written, but scant intellectual content
- mostly opinion.

D and F

These are efforts that are wildly shorter than they ought to be to grapple seriously with ideas.

- or- those that are extremely problematic in many of the areas mentioned above: aims, structure, use of evidence, language, etc.;
- or- those that do not come close to addressing the expectations of the essay assignment.

Participation:

The majority of class time will be devoted to discussion of the assigned readings. Discussion can include (but is not limited to) an analysis and/or critique of the author's position, a comparison of the assigned work to another text, or debate as to the meaning or merit of a given work (or particular points therein).

Class participation is evaluated on quality rather than quantity. Comments need not mirror the position of the author (or the professor). You are graded not on the "correctness" of your position, but rather on your analysis of the material and your ability to articulate your ideas. You don't have to be at the center of every debate, but students who make little or no effort to enter discussions will receive a lower participation grade. Discussion will become lively, heated even. Always respect the positions of others. When you disagree with someone, be sure to criticize the *idea* and not the person.

Participation will be graded according to the following criteria:

A

The student in this grade range arrives in class each day thoroughly prepared with comments and questions on the assigned reading. Comments reveal that the student has read carefully; this student occasionally initiates the discussion without waiting for the professor to do so. This student does not, however, try to dominate the class, but listens carefully to the remarks made by fellow class members, and responds as readily to these as to the instructor's questions.

B

The student in this grade range participates in most discussions, although not as fully or reliably as the student described above. There is evidence of having done the reading. This student pays attention to the comments of the other students.

C

The student in this grade range participates only intermittently, and is more willing to discuss broad, general questions than to engage in concrete analysis of an assigned text. Sometimes unprepared, this student lacks interest in the ideas of other members of the class, neglects to bring the proper text to class, and is often inattentive.

D or F

The student in this grade range seldom if ever participates.

Things that lower your participation grade:

- * Not paying attention in class
- * A ringing cellphone
- * Talking to your neighbor or holding conversations separate from the class discussion
- * A student who is seen using their cell phone for any reason will receive an F as their final grade in the course

NOTE: Unlike paper grades, participation will *not* be given plus/minus or split grades, and your final grade is weighted in a manner such as to make it impossible for you to receive an A for the course if your participation grade is not an A.

Semester Schedule:

Week 1:

8/27

Introduction and Course Outline
Discussion on the scientific study of politics

8/29

Plato, *Crito*

Week 2:

9/3

Andrain, Preface
Andrain, Part 1 Introduction
Andrain, Chapter 1, "Concepts of Politics"

9/5

Andrain, Part 2 Introduction
Andrain, Chapter 3, "Creation of a Common Identity"

Week 3:

9/10

Andrain, Chapter 4, "The Development of Effective Instruments of Power"

9/12

Andrain, Chapter 5, "The Establishment of Legitimate Authority"

Week 4:

9/17

Andrain, Chapter 6, "The Production and Distribution of Goods and Services"

9/19

Andrain, Part 3 Introduction
Andrain, Chapter 7, "Democratic Systems"

Week 5:

9/24

Andrain, Chapter 8 “Totalitarian Systems” (199-204)
Andrain, Chapter 9, “Traditional Autocratic Systems” (221-224)

9/26

Andrain, Chapter 11, “The International Political System”
Andrain, Part 4 Introduction
Review for Exam

Week 6:

10/1

Midterm Exam

10/3

TBA

Week 7:

10/8

Plato, *The Republic*, Book 2 (pages 46-65)

10/10

Plato, *The Republic*, Book 3 (pages 66-86)

Week 8:

10/15

Plato, *The Republic*, Book 3 (pages 86-102)

10/17

Midterm Break

Week 9:

10/22

Plato, *The Republic*, Book 4 (pages 103-121)

10/24

Plato, *The Republic*, Book 4 (pages 121-135)

Week 10:

10/29

Plato, *The Republic*, Book 6 (pages 176-197)

10/31

Plato, *The Republic*, Book 6 (pages 197-207)

Week 11:

11/5

Plato, *The Republic*, Book 7 (pages 208-237)

11/7

Plato, *The Republic*, Book 8 (pages 238-259)

Week 12:

11/12

Plato, *The Republic*, Book 8 (pages 259-269)

Plato, *The Republic*, Introduction

11/14

Exam Two

Week 13:

11/19

Russell, *Power*, Chapters 1 & 2

11/21

Russell, *Power*, Chapters 3 & 8

Week 14:

11/26

Russell, *Power*, Chapters 9 & 10

11/28

Thanksgiving Break

Week 15:

12/3

Russell, *Power*, Chapters 13 & 17

12/5

Russell, *Power*, Chapter 18

12/10

Final Papers Due (two paper and one electronic copy required)